

TZB-065E

To the
TZ Bridge Project Team

As a regular commuter across the TZ Bridge for almost 18 years I would like to offer my observations and recommendations. I am a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of New York and in the course of my work; I am involved with monitoring, observing, and testing products for their ability to perform their intended function.

The TZ Bridge and associated roadways are intended to convey users along this East/West corridor extending essentially from Suffern to Port Chester. Any time there is an interruption in the design speed designated for traffic flow, it is essentially a **failure** of the system to perform its intended function. Clearly, on a daily basis, there are multiple failures at multiple locations in the present system. And clearly, the bridge is a frequent location for failures in the system.

In 50 years, the daily traffic on the bridge went from 18,000 to 140,000 or an increase of almost 8 fold (according to newspaper reports). Yes Rockland and Westchester are now fully built up but travelers on 287 through Rockland and Westchester also come from Orange, Putnam, and even Connecticut. With the trend that people will commute ever further for work, and sprawl continuing to expand into the outer counties, there is still significant traffic growth to be expected for this East/West corridor in the next 50 years.

Based on simple math and bridge related facts, I believe there are serious shortcomings in the new bridge proposals. The bridge data comes from local newspaper articles covering issues related to the bridge – I assume they are somewhat accurate. The bridge was originally designed with 6 lanes to carry up to 100,000 vehicles a day. Today it carries 140,000 vehicles a day. Using the traffic design criteria for the original bridge, the bridge today should have 9 (8.4 calculated lanes would require 9) lanes of traffic not 7. Thus as a starting point, any design must begin at 9 lanes and either immediately provide or have the ability to expand beyond that for future growth. So, even if the corridor traffic only doubles in the next 50 years, we will still need 17 lanes of capacity (throughout the corridor).

Some suggest that mass transit will provide this added capacity. Presently, mass transit in the form of the TZ Express only handles about 1% of the daily bridge users. Further, they are likely additional bridge traffic as a significant percentage of those bus riders are taking the train into New York City. Were they to have driven into the city, these commuters might actually never use the TZ Bridge. One of the largest reasons why people still drive into New York City is the long and convoluted commute when using public transportation. In particular, the need for a “one seat” ride from start to finish has been identified and is the driving force for mass transit plans by other infrastructure authorities. This principle also applies to any mass transit that must serve the East/West corridor. To be useful and



utilized, mass transit has to offer a benefit that outweighs its drawbacks. Unfortunately, mass transit providing a “one seat” ride is even more difficult along this corridor when one considers the large area of origin for most commuters and the just as large destination area. So even if the mass transit ridership increases by a factor of 10 over the next 50 years, at best, this is only a reduction of one required private vehicle lane for the corridor.

The current bridge proposals appear to be variations of a new bridge with 8 lanes for private vehicles and 2 restricted lanes for mass transit. Given the simple analysis above, it appears that there is an over reliance and over allocation of capacity to mass transit. Using the traffic design criteria from the first bridge, it would appear that the current proposals fail to address the needs of the present and future traffic patterns unless the existing bridge remains and the new bridge provides the additional capacity.

As a resident of New York State and a daily TZ commuter, I feel that both my tax dollars and bridge tolls have not been put to good use in the last 20 years. Now that the planning for the future corridor needs are happening in earnest, I hope that there is true foresight and planning given to the needs of the region for the next 50 years. The present proposals can not even handle the current traffic demands, let alone the needs 20 or more years from now. Fortunately, it’s not too late to head in the right direction. I encourage the planning members to rethink their proposals so they will be viewed as visionaries of a functional and dare I say “model” highway infrastructure.

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